

1. Virtue in Lay Life: Purpose, Classification, and Practice

For the prince Siddhattha, who left his home into homelessness, who abandoned all of his luxuries of the palace, his friends and relatives, there was only one expectation – to become free from old age, sickness, and death. Then, when the prince Siddhattha became a Buddha, His decision to teach was again with that one expectation – that His Teachings will support other living beings on their Path to the freedom from old age, sickness, and death.

Thus in the Buddha's Teachings we practice with that single purpose – to get free from old age, sickness, and death. ... Well, then for those who do not have that purpose, they still might progress and benefit a lot from the Dhamma, but it is like if the Buddha gave them a beautifully grown ripe apple of the proper size, proper texture, excellent taste, and instead of eating it they would use it as a tennis ball.

The Dhamma has so many facets and components devised by the Buddha so that they lead the wise follower toward the ultimate goal, i.e. the freedom of suffering. Those facets and components have to be considered seriously and followed sufficiently.

To attain the freedom from suffering there are three facets of the Path which have to be perfected by the student:

1. *Sīla* (morality, ethics)
2. *Samādhi* (meditation, concentration)
3. *Paññā* (insight, wisdom)

As we can see, morality (*sīla*) is the first in the list. *Sīla* is the basis of the meditation practice – and thus of the Path itself.

Why is it not generosity (*dāna*)? Because it is possible to become Enlightened even without generosity – although the Path would be comparable to the attempt of a snail trying to pass a piece of desert under the shining sun. The merits of generosity provide the student with the good *kamma*, i.e. the ease of practice and the basic needs that the student may need during the training. With generosity the practice of morality is much easier, because the student is happy, satisfied, healthy, and well supported in the undertaking.

The Purpose of Morality

There would be 5 chief reasons why morality is important on the Path to Enlightenment.

1. Morality creates peace.
2. Morality preserves peace.
3. Morality serves as a mental support when the student suffers from anxiety and restlessness during meditation.
4. Morality increases the well-being of the student by arousing faith and generosity in the other people
5. Morality inspires others to follow the path

Apart from these purposes, morality is also reported to arouse faith of deities (gods) and thus create a supernatural protection for the student.

In the case of monks, there are 10 reasons why they should follow the ultimate codex of morality, i.e. Vinaya:¹

1. *saṅghasutṭhuta* = for the benefit of Saṅgha
2. *saṅghaphāsuta* = for the comfort of Saṅgha
3. *dummaṅkūnaṃ puggalānaṃ niggahāya* = to hold back the persons of wrong intentions
4. *pesalānaṃ bhikkhūnaṃ phāsuvihārāya* = for the comfortable abiding of the virtuous monks
5. *diṭṭhadhammikānaṃ āsavānaṃ saṃvarāya* = in order to prevent from the taints of the present life
6. *samparāyikānaṃ āsavānaṃ paṭighātāya* = to destroy the taints that are about to arise (in a future life)
7. *appasannānaṃ pasādāya* = to arouse faith in those who don't have faith (yet)
8. *pasannānaṃ bhīyyobhāvāya* = to encrease the faith of those who (already) have faith
9. *saddhammatṭhitiyā* = for the continuation of the pure Dhamma
10. *vinayānuggahāya* = to promote restraint

Virtue in monks is essential for the Buddha's Teachings, because the monks are the benchmark of the society's character. In other words, the monks are the paradigm of morality, the paradigm of noble character for all of the society in the area where they are.

Classification of Morality

Morality is classified according to the follower's circumstance. We can simply say that there is morality for lay people and morality for the monastics.

Lay People's Morality

According to the *Upasatha Sutta* of *AN 3.7.10* it is good for lay people to follow the eight precepts during the *Upasatha* days (i.e. the four lunar days each month: full-moon day, new-moon day, the eighth day after full-moon day, and the eighth day after new-moon day.)

The Buddha suggested to lay people that they follow five precepts every day, and eight precepts during the *Upasatha* days. The novices (probationers) who are not yet "part of the Saṅgha" are supposed to follow ten precepts – a kind of higher level of the eight precepts.

See the table on the next page:

¹ This list of reasons for Vinaya rules is mentioned in *Ariguttara Nikāya 2* and *10*, and throughout the *Pārājika* and *Pācittiya Pāḷi* of *Vinaya Piṭaka*.

	Five Precepts ²	Eight Precepts ³	Ten Precepts ⁴
1.	No Killing	No Killing	No Killing
2.	No Stealing	No Stealing	No Stealing
3.	No Sexual Misconduct (Adultery)	Celibacy	Celibacy
4.	No telling lies	No telling lies	No telling lies
5.	No consummation of intoxicants	No consummation of intoxicants	No consummation of intoxicants
6.		No eating after noon and before the dawn	No eating after noon and before the dawn
7.		No entertainment of dancing, singing, playing musical instruments; no self-beautification by flowers, scents, ointments/powders, adornments, etc.	No entertainment of dancing, singing, playing musical instruments;
8.		Avoiding sitting or lying down on luxurious furniture.	no self-beautification by flowers, scents, ointments/powders, adornments, etc.
9.			Avoiding sitting or lying down on luxurious furniture.
10.			No using of money.

The rules colored in green are same in all three sets, those colored in light blue are same in the sets of eight and ten, the rules in yellow are same also in eight and ten but in a different arrangement, the rules in orange color indicate peculiarity for the set.

As we can see from the graph, four of the five rules are same in the sets of eight and ten. The eight rules (or Uposatha rules) and ten rules are different only by the fact that the seventh rule of Uposatha is split into two in the set of ten rules, and that in the set of ten rules there is the rule of not using money.

The rule of not using money is essential to monastics, and it is – based on our observation of the eight rules and ten rules – the criterion which distinguishes the monastics from the lay people.

As for monks and nuns, the rules are "*apariyanta*" (immense). The Commentary known as *Visuddhimagga* counts them as "91 805 036 000".⁵ Although it sounds like a phone number, it is in fact the

² The five precepts when counted come up to the whopping 115 occurrences in *Sutta Piṭaka* itself, and yet another 18 occurrences in the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka*.

³ The eight precepts are mentioned in *AN 3.7.10. Uposathasutta* to the Buddha's lay supporter Visākhā by the Buddha Himself, with the encouragement that she also follows them just like the Arahants in the olden times.

⁴ The ten precepts are prescribed by the Buddha as the requirement for novices (*sāmaṇera*) to become and stay as novices in *Vinaya Piṭaka – Mahāvaggapāṭi – Mahākhanda – 42. Sikkhāpadakathā*.

⁵ This number is not mentioned only in *Visuddhimagga*. It is also mentioned in the *Commentaries to Apadānapāṭi, Paṭisambhidāmaggapāṭi*, and some Sub-Commentaries also quote *Commentary to Majjhima Nikāya* (but there I couldn't find it).

number of all rules given by the original *Vinaya Piṭaka*. Unfortunately, I haven't been able to find any analysis of this number (i.e. which rules are what), although the *Visuddhimagga* itself explains that it is counted including all the permutations of different circumstances, devices, and objects/persons related to the rules.

The 227 rules for monks and 311 rules for nuns are only the famous rules. They do not include the important decisions of the Buddha, such as that monks should not travel during the three months of rains retreat, that monks should not eat meat of humans, etc.

The Practice of Morality

The practice of virtue/morality is based on right view. In the *Mahācattārīsaka Sutta* of *MN 117*. It is the worldly right view as well as the supernatural right view (i.e. of the Four Noble Truths) which leads the student to follow the precepts of morality. Without right view there is no right thought, no right speech, no right action, no right livelihood, implies the Buddha in the discourse.

As we can see among many Buddhists native and converted, their right view however is not sufficient for their practice of morality. To practice morality they also need to be satisfied with whatever they have, and associate a "good friend" as well.

By these three – right view, satisfaction, and good friend, it is possible to practice even the strictest morality. Considering the fact that morality is the basic aspect of Noble Path, we should remember the Buddha's mention that a good friend is one hundred percent of one's progress on the Noble Path. From a good friend one learns what is the right view, what is its morality, how to follow it, and in case of one's own failure to follow the precepts one also receives the encouragement for restrain himself/herself in the future.

The practice of morality is further supported by one's meditation practice. That is because it is necessary to be totally pure when one meditates. If one tends to be evil, break five precepts, or deceive others, one's practice of meditation will be hindered by worry and anxiety. On the other hand, if one practices the precepts of virtue ardently, they can remind themselves of their noble zeal while meditating – and thus easily dispels any worries or anxiety which his/her mind would dare to create.

Higher morality will of course serve that purpose better. The higher morality is particularly useful for yogis, because it creates a personal environment conducive for concentration and insight.

Finally, because the purity of one's morality is dependent on one's power of faith and determination it is commonly recommended to "take" (i.e. recite) the precepts in front of a virtuous monk or an image of the Buddha. The traditional custom of reciting precepts repeating after a monk when one visits a monastery or during a meditation retreat is an additional support from monks apparently created by monks themselves to increase the morality levels in their environment. I am not aware of a single case throughout the Pāli scriptures where a monk (or the Buddha) would recite five precepts or eight precepts for the lay people and have the lay people repeat them.

2. Light Flashing Pagodas - Will A Few Videos Conquer Materialist Nihilism?

In Sri Lanka and Myanmar there has been encountered a strange phenomenon related to their pagodas. The pagoda starts to flash light either at night or during the day, without any electronic or other arrangement. This phenomenon has happened in entirely different places without any intelligible connection or expectation.

See please the links below for the videos right from those sites:

1. Sri Lanka - Somavati Cetiya

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yLdqwItKHC8>

<https://buddhism.stackexchange.com/questions/13636/miracles-from-lord-buddha-vs-messages-from-gods>

2. Myanmar - Kathar Township, Minn Lay Ywar (ကသာမြို့နယ်၊ မင်းလယ်ရွာ)

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=254841028364807&id=100015167355654&hc_location=ufi

3. Myanmar - Taung-Dwin Gyi Myo, Shwe Yaung Daw Phayar (တောင်တွင်းကြီးမြို့ ရွှေရောင်တော်ဘုရား)

https://www.facebook.com/wee550/videos/1302881009770436/?hc_ref=ART9tse3sXapvcTJIJZG-4Zk52s7YN_YFe77Ru7bqccQXpMdqlN_Jpzpt9b_VICVBGg

May all beings be happy and healthy ☺

monk Saraṇa